The DIAMOND JUBILEE of the METHODIST PROTESTANT CHURCH

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A SERMON

In Commemoration
of the . . . . . .

SEVENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY

OF THE FOUNDING OF THE

METHODIST PROTESTANT CHURCH . . . . . .

Preached Before the

Maryland Annual Conference

AT POCOMOKE CITY, MD.

APRIL 1, 1903

By REV. T. H. LEWIS, D. D.

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THE following resolutions, offered by Rev. H. L. Elderdice, D. D. and Rev. T. O. Crouse, were adopted by the Maryland Annual Conference at Pocomoke City, Md., April 1, 1903.

WHEREAS, the Conference Sermon of T. H. Lewis has struck the keynote of our Diamond Jubilee, and

WHEREAS, it is a contribution to Methodist Historical Literature—especially Methodist Protestant Literature—well worthy the widest circulation, and,

WHEREAS, its preservation in a permanent book form will prove of vital value to the children of our church, therefore:

RESOLVED 1. That Dr. Lewis be respectfully requested to consent to its publication by the Conference.

RESOLVED 2. That a Committee of three be now appointed to consider the form of said publication.

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"Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom." Luke, xii, 32.

TRUST I feel profoundly, as I ought, the honor conferred on me by the Conference in the appointment to preach the Annual Sermon to-day. But I must confess that this is not the only, nor the principal feeling I have in this matter. I am overwhelmed with a sense of my own incapacity. Your minds and hearts have been turning to this occasion with high anticipation, and in your enthusiasm you have named it the Diamond Jubilee. But how shall one build on this foundation who has nothing but wood, hay, stubble? We hold our Church of so much worth we would worthily commemorate this seventy-fifth anniversary of its origin. And into this fierce light of grateful pride you have thrust me forward to speak for you all. I can honestly declare that there has not been a day since my appointment when I would not have refused if I could.

The resolution of the Conference has determined that this sermon "shall be of the nature of a review of the providence of God as it appears in the work and growth of our Church." The scope of the subject overwhelms me also. Moreover, to attempt to review the providence of God, in the sense of attributing this or that event to its influence, may well be considered a bold undertaking. For who by searching can find out God? We know only parts of his ways. The play of forces and events that make up human life and human history are complicated beyond the power of the human mind to set in order perfectly. Nevertheless, we have the faculty of faith; and it is still possible to believe that "all things work together for good to them that love God." The history of our Church ought to mean something to us, and when we come to the seventy-fifth anniversary of its origin, we ought to be able to declare its meaning without extravagance or uncertainty. It may not be of general or even wide interest, but if we are humble and devout, we may undertake the task to the praise of God. May he

graciously give us this devout and humble mind, and order our thoughts to the glory of his praise!

The words of the text were addressed to a small church, and they were left on record for the encouragement of small churches. The men who founded the Methodist Protestant Church must have drawn great comfort from them, and they offer themselves to us to-day as an appropriate text for such an occasion. I feel justified, therefore, in passing over the general suggestions that arise from a consideration of the meaning of these words as applied to the whole Church of Christ, that we may spend the whole time in dwelling upon the particular message they have for us, as one of the branches of that Church.

The verse falls apart naturally so as to permit us to consider the *range*, the *nature* and the *results* of the Reform Movement in Methodism which took shape in the Methodist Protestant Church.

1. It has been made our reproach frequently that we are a small church. It would greatly increase the ardor of our

own people, and, in the minds of many, it would give great weight to our principles if we were not a small church. Why are we a little flock? I think a review of some of the reasons found in the peculiarities of our origin and the hindrances surrounding us from the beginning, will give us a satisfactory answer to this question.

Under the odium of expulsion, our fathers were denied the merit of contending for a principle; their pretensions as martyrs for religious liberty were laughed at; and they were thrust out from their ecclesiastical household as brawlers and disturbers of the peace. Their cause could be fairly tried only in the forum of reason and conscience; but their ecclesiastical superiors struck and would not hear. Their appeal to the public had to be made in the form of reasoned conclusions and patient exegesis of Scripture; forms about which men in general were and are impatient or indifferent. And as they could not get a hearing from their brethren nor from strangers about a theory of abstract rights or a form of government so easily

confused with other and ignoble issues, their growth was slow and difficult.

Our fathers went out from their old church without a thought of contending for any rights in the property they had helped to secure, but accepted cheerfully the necessity of building new churches and parsonages for themselves. This was heroic and it ministered to peace, but it helped to keep them little.

The cause of reform was not primarily a preacher's cause, and as no promises of extraordinary financial support could be offered, its pastors were of necessity only those heroic enough to undertake a warfare for others almost at their own charges. This made acute the normal condition of all ages of the Church, that "the laborers are few."

Many, perhaps most of those ardently devoted to the cause of reform never left the church which refused to be reformed. It is much easier to be a reformer within the organization. There were enough reformers in the General Conference of 1820 to carry, by a two-thirds vote, a resolution making presiding elders elective by the Annual Conference. But

when this decision was rendered nugatory by parliamentary jugglery the majority submitted and not five of them joined the new church.

Our fathers desired to be nothing but Methodists, and appealed only to those who desired to be Methodists to unite with them. Yet they had constantly to meet the most bitter reproaches of those who declared that they had renounced Methodism; that in opposing Episcopacy they were really fighting their venerable father in God, John Wesley; that in asking for the right of appeal from the appointing power they were seeking to overturn the itinerancy; that in contending for the right of laymen to be admitted into the councils of the church they were inveighing against the divine authority of pastors; and that their whole attitude of inquiry and criticism and debate was a proof of declining piety and of a want of sympathy with the true Methodistic zeal for the salvation of souls. And so our cause, from the beginning, was obnoxious to many who felt that the sacred name of Methodism was assailed in the house of its friends.

From causes like these it would seem that the Methodist Protestant Church was providentially predestined to be little.

Our fathers doubtless counted this cost when they began to build. No prophecies of extravagant success are to be found in their writings. One of Snethen's boldest flights predicted that the principle of representation would finally proselyte every Methodist in the United States. But he added to this prophecy: "They may indeed remain Episcopal Methodists;" so that he did not expect to gain members for the Methodist Protestant Church so much as votes for the Methodist Protestant principle.

If our fathers had thought it necessary to belong to a large church they would have stayed where they were. Their consolation was to build a church of large ideas, and I think it may be said in all soberness that their ideas have the largest membership in the world.

But I cannot doubt that they also drew strong consolation from this benediction of the Good Shepherd. From him, at

any rate, the word carried no reproach, no depreciation. It is the word which love inspires with exquisite tenderness and fondness: the word by which the heart names its darlings, "little flock." The men who were denied so many things by their contemporaries had a share in this legacy too explicitly written to be denied. Whatever numbers and wealth and prestige might entitle others to receive, their title to the kingdom was clear, for they were "little."

In reviewing this phase of our history it is still impossible to escape the reproach that in some minds will always attach itself to the fact that we are a a small church. Large minds are content with large ideas irrespective of how people vote upon these ideas. But the world is not crowded with large minds, and our particular world has its share of those who are impatient of every review that leaves out a flattering census. What will we do then with this word and fact "little?" Are we disposed to regard it as providential? Can we bring ourselves to the point of sincerely participating in the encouragement our fathers found in

the words of our text? Or, are we disposed to turn from it, still unreconciled to the fact and distrustful of it as in some way a misfortune and a hindrance?

As in the material world, so in the spiritual, bodies attract in proportion to their size. True it is every Christian's duty to spread the Redeemer's Kingdom and so make every small church large and every large church larger. But even so there will still remain small churches, since size is a relative matter after all. And it is so easy to be caught in the toils of spiritual pride that the analysis of our dissatisfaction with a small church ought to be candid and thorough. When we turn away from our own ecclesiastical household because it is small; or slacken our efforts because so little seems possible of accomplishment in so limited a sphere; our dissatisfaction may be justifiable, and our decision to seek larger fields may proceed from motives untainted with any selfish considerations. But we need to be bravely and conscientiously on guard against the extreme subtlety of our inclinations. If God's providence brings forth the small

church and places us there, to turn away from it is to turn away from Christ, is to criticise his providence, to despise his gracious benediction and to deny the practicability and power of Christ's favorite method, to accomplish results by the weak things of this world which shall confound the mighty.

2. Another encouragement our fathers must have found in this verse is the word by which our Lord expresses the relation of the church to himself. He calls the disciples, few though they are, his "flock." This tender and intimate relation has come to mean the peculiar blessing vouchsafed to the legitimate church. If we are his flock, his true flock, the matter of size becomes insignificant.

Our fathers felt this acutely and resented the charge that they were separating themselves from the body of Christ in organizing a new church. The sin of schism could not be fairly charged against those who, cast out for no fault condemned by God's word, must either abandon ideas which were vital to them, and which God by strange providences

had thrust upon them; or create a new organization. Had they the right to do this? Is the Methodist Protestant Church a true church, or were its founders mere schismatics?

On the question of denominational divisions I think we may say in general that the New Testament does not condemn and even expects them. I challenge any man to show that there was any closer union between the church at Jerusalem and the church at Antioch in the days of the apostles than there is between, say, the Methodist Protestant Church and Methodist Episcopal Church today.

The expression of our Lord in his intercessory prayer, "that they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in us," cannot be legitimately pressed into the meaning of organic union. The terms used and the purpose added to this prayer, "that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me," both preclude this interpretation. The union of the Father and the Son is not an organic union. If the union of disciples is to be like that of the Father and the Son it

must be the invisible but none the less real unity of spirit. And it is contrary to the spirit and letter of our Lord's teaching to assume that he was thinking of an imposing aggregate of numbers or the might of concentrated machinery as the testimony which the unity of his disciples was to bear to his Messiahship. Again and again he emphasized the truth that it was "not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit" that the world was to be converted. And, for the same reason, the unity which was to convince the world that he came from God was the unity of spirit, the only power he ever relied on.

In the same way, and more directly, we may interpret his words, "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; them also I must bring (or "lead" as the margin reads) and they shall hear My voice; and they shall become one flock, one Shepherd." One flock in many folds, that is the divine idea of Christian union.

Now when it is settled that all Christians do not have to be alike in outward forms or even in mental conceptions but only in spirit, the question whether any particular division among Christian

people is justifiable must be determined after an examination of the issue, and every denomination must answer for itself. To this bar, therefore, we bring our church, claiming that, although organically separated from other bodies, we are not spiritually separated from them nor from Christ; we are his true flock and the organization has been ordered in the providence of God, not in the passions of men.

This will require us to go over the grounds of our separation from the Methodist Episcopal Church, which, happily, we can now do without any bitterness. But you will not desire me to give historical details. I assume your knowledge of the history and confine myself to interpretation.

The Methodist Episcopal Church was organized in 1784 with a form of government which was never formally ratified by its subjects and was never entirely acceptable to its authors. No succeeding year after its organization failed to elicit some note of discord and proposal for reform. In ten years this dissatisfaction culminated in a secession on the ques-

tion of giving preachers an appeal from the stationing authority. In twenty years it produced a delegated General Conference with restrictions upon the legislative power. In thirty-six years it grew into an overwhelming, although ineffective, majority in favor of electing presiding elders. And in forty-four years it brought forth the Methodist Protestant Church, which gathered up all these reforms and added lay representation.

Our fathers did not secede, nor was the organization of the Methodist Protestant Church an intentional or even a voluntary movement. Why then did Episcopal Methodism tolerate reformers for forty years and then expel our fathers? It was because while other reformers attempted details of reform, our fathers seized the keystone of the whole structure. To admit laymen into the government of the church was to make all reforms possible; was, in fact, not reform, but revolution.

Monarchs have given their subjects a constitution and still remained monarchs; but an elective monarchy, strictly speaking, is a contradiction in terms. Meth-

odism was reformed when, in 1804, its rulers presented to their subjects the restrictions under which they promised to govern them. But when, in 1828, the subjects proposed to dictate to their rulers the terms upon which they would permit them to govern, it was no longer a matter of petty detail, but involved the existence of the government itself.

I do not see why we should blame the Methodists of that day for expelling our fathers. It was the instinct of self-preservation working in them. I can afford to listen patiently while my friend suggests improvements in my house: a new window here, a door there, a new gable, another porch. But I cannot be expected to receive gratefully his proposal to improve my house by taking the foundation from under it. History has verified the warning of this instinct. The government of the Methodist Episcopal Church remained unchanged from 1804 to 1872. Then lay delegates were admitted to the General Conference, and the government has been "spinning down the ringing grooves of change" ever since.

No. I believe God's providence was overruling the passions of men. He had a mission for Episcopal Methodism and it was not his time for its destruction. They who would have overturned it did far better than they planned: they left it to pursue its noble career, and they built up a new organization for another noble career, to work by its side and sound forth the Gospel in another key.

Therefore I cannot blame our fathers for persisting in the discussion which led and which they knew would lead to their expulsion. Theirs was an instinct too, if you please; an instinct of progress. Most reverently do I believe in the providential origin of the Methodist Protestant Church. God had a mission for another type of Methodism. We may not read all his purposes, but note only this: Episcopal Methodism resisted the pleadings of its loyal sons for lay representation forty and four years, and finally expelled them to make an end. Forty and four years after these expulsions Episcopal Methodism adopted lay delegation into its organic law. That which pleading could not gain example compelled.

But note, most of all, this, which goes deeper than history and becomes philosophy. Out of this division emerged the fact, long hidden in the smoke of controversy, that these two forms of Methodism represent absolutely diverse principles, both valid and both, perhaps, necessary.

Many good people are troubled over the separate existence of our church, because it appears to them that all Methodists are now so much alike that it is captious to perpetuate our small differences. If we are to feed our loyalty to Representative Methodism only by hatred of Episcopal Methodism, I join them in deprecating the continuance of the separation. But this is a childish form of Methodist Protestantism. Our real warrant is in the principles we uphold and true loyalty must detect and lay hold of those principles.

Our church cannot spare its members the trouble of thinking. Our fathers were philosophers and we must at least understand their philosophy.

External resemblances are often misleading, and disappear when traced to

their respective principles. This is true in a marked degree of forms of government. A despot may give his subjects as much liberty as citizens enjoy under a constitution; but this does not obliterate the vast difference between a privilege and a right.

So if we desire to know what are the differences between Episcopal and Representative Methodism we must compare their principles.

It is impossible to understand Episcopal Methodism without knowing the character of Francis Asbury; and those who would know what Representative Methodism stands for must study the writings of Nicholas Snethen. For these two men represent two principles of government radically different. Asbury, in government, was a materialist; Snethen an idealist. Asbury believed in absolutism tempered with religion; Snethen, in liberty restricted by law. Asbury's study of human nature convinced him that men must be ruled; Snethen's, that they might be developed. Asbury's ideal of government was a compact, mobile mass, under a leadership that would

sacrifice the individual for the glory of the mass; Snethen's ideal reduced government to a mere opportunity for developing and glorifying full-statured and free-willed individuality. Neither concerned himself much about doctrines or ceremonies. Asbury's supreme effort and triumph was in administration, in creating and perpetuating a government without a constitution, almost without laws, by the infusion of his sheer personality;and in persuading multitudes to to accept it as good for their souls. Snethen's triumph was not so impressive as a material exhibition, but he laid the axe to the root of ecclesiastical absolutism by the simple expedient of giving unofficial Methodists the right to vote. He deliberately effaced himself from the role of leader in order that he might give more impressive emphasis to the Magna Charta of Representative Methodism: "One is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren." But while the childless Asbury left no heir to the most impressive personality in American Methodism, Snethen's posterity is the universal Methodist Church of modern times.

I have not instituted this comparison to depreciate or even to criticise Episcopal Methodism. That type of Methodism has commended itself to millions of our fellow Christians and has wrought mightily in pulling down strongholds of wickedness and in spreading Scriptural holiness over the land. May God continue to bless it and may its adherents continue to improve it!

But I have thought it just to our fathers to emphasize by this comparison the fact that our own type of Methodism has been illustrating and commending to all the millions of Methodism great principles whose vitality is not yet spent. And I have thought it would be profitable for us to remember that God has also used this type of Methodism for a purpose, if less splendidly, at least as vitally connected with the glory of his Kingdom as that which so far outnumbers us.

And as long as God finds use for both these types, diverse as they are in their principles and aims, why may we not freely praise them both? Why may we not acknowledge that as long as men differ in their perception of truth there

must be differences in the activities guided by that perception?

Perhaps the time is coming when there shall be but one Methodist Church. Perhaps some of us think the time is at hand, and that we could even now reckon our warfare as accomplished. I trust none of us will be found interposing personal prejudice or contentiousness in the way when God strikes the hour of that time. But, on the other hand, I indulge the honest hope that no mere sentiment for union *per se*, no panic of fear that we may be swept out of sight in the rush for combinations in the present day, will make us disloyal to the truth as we see it. Better not sell the truth even for union. If there are irreconcilable differences in these two great types of truth which no external resemblances can cover up, then, in the majestic name of truth, let us stand in our place, and wait God's time, and do God's work, and keep the trust committed to us until God shall relieve the watch and say, "Well done."

3. We come next to the consideration of the great promise of the text: "it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom."

From the beginning of Christ's public ministry he declared that the kingdom of God was at hand. He called this the Good News he had come to bring all men and exhorted them to repent and believe it. He taught his disciples, when they prayed to say, "Thy Kingdom come." And he encouraged them with the strongest assurances to expect the ultimate triumph of this kingdom over all opposition and its universal prevalence over the earth.

The meaning of this kingdom in its most general terms is the personal reign of Jesus Christ as a King of Righteousness, Mercy and Peace over the hearts and consciences of men. Jesus of Nazareth, proclaimed in derision the King of the Jews, will be acknowledged the King of all men. The kingdoms of this world, founded on force, or on superstition, or on religion, or on philosophy, or on art, or on labor, or on wealth, *all* the kingdoms of this world; of every part of this world, civilized and uncivilized, bond and free, pagan and Mohammedan and Buddhist and Confucian and all other religious and non-religious

nations and tribes and peoples—all the kingdoms of this *world;* of every age of this world, the critical present age, or if it develop into a skeptical age, and that into a godless age, and that into a revolutionary age, and that into a blaspheming age—*all the kingdoms of this world* however and wherever and whenever set up, have all one destiny written, one end to which their whole creation moves; they shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ.

But what is this our Lord says: "It is your Father's good pleasure to give *you* the Kingdom?"

In its most general terms this means that the conquest of the world is to be accomplished through the instrumentality of the Christian Church, the flock of Christ. And if there be more than one flock, then every true flock of Christ, faithful to its Shepherd, must be a successful, triumphant flock. Whether relatively small or great, it will achieve results commensurate with the great purpose and the almighty power of its Lord. In the method of its activities a servant, it will yet occupy a true kingdom

and wield a truly royal power. Its mission is to preach a Gospel of peace and good will and it commands no armies, yet it shall prevail and overturn, and finally set itself up on the ruins of all opposing systems. Christ's Church is not belligerent, but it must become dominant; it accepts obloquy, endures persecution, glories in tribulation, but it does not fail as long as it remains a true Church of Christ.

It remains therefore for us "to review the Providence of God as it appears in the work and growth of our Church," to see how this promise has been fulfilled in our case.

There is a sense, of course, in which we cannot count God's blessings in dollars or in census reports. God's Church is a spiritual kingdom and its triumphs must be spiritual triumphs. In its highest sense it is not a kingdom located here or there in visible splendor, but within human hearts, working out a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. But, so far as it is possible to estimate the success of a church at all, we are forced to estimate it in material

terms; we must consider its appearance and work in the world and count its triumphs in results which the world can see and understand.

Cato said to his friends who complained that Rome had not erected a statue in his honor: "I had rather men should ask why my statue is not set up, than why it is." And it should be more gratifying to us that men, reading our history and studying our principles, should wonder why our church is small than that they should wonder why it is not. Still the conviction remains that visible success is one of the credentials every true church must be able to show. Our fathers had to face this test from the beginning. It was not enough to found a church on true principles; their opponents asked them to show the truth of their principles by their works. Christ promises his little flock to give them the kingdom.

In obedience to what seems a reasonable demand, I pass therefore from the justification of history and the logic of principles, to try our church by the test of results. I am far from desiring that

our whole case should not be summed up in figures. The record of our growth appears to me no more discreditable than the history of our origin, and I should be glad for the public to learn it by heart.

There appears to be no way of properly estimating the growth of our church but by comparing it with other churches, and, naturally, the other prominent type of Methodism occurs to most persons as the proper standard of comparison. I have no objection to this, but it is only just to remind our friends in other communions, and to encourage the more timid among us, by a reference to one of the simplest principles in arithmetic, viz: that the true judgment of increase does not depend upon the product nor upon the multiplicand, but upon the multiplier. The servant in the parable that brought four talents to his lord received the same reward as he that brought ten; not because four is as much as ten, but because two multiplied by two is as great an increase and indicates as much ability and faithfulness as five multiplied by two. The great test of success everywhere is not how much had

you then, nor how much have you now, but how much have you multiplied what you had. And so a church should be judged; not by what it started with, nor by what it has. The value of its work must be estimated by the size of its multiplier. With this understanding I shall endeavor to set forth the history of our growth.

(a) First of all, it is a matter of profound thankfulness to be able to say that our church has been growing ever since it started. The increase has not been uniform, but at every General Conference the report has shown some increase over the preceding report. If we take all these reports and average the rate of increase, it would be the same as if we had increased our membership seventeen per cent. every four years or four and one-quarter per cent. annually. In the same period the population of the United States has increased less than three per cent. annually.

Our church began with a convention in 1828. Six years later at our first General Conference our membership was 26,587. From that time to the present

it has increased 700 per cent. The Methodist Episcopal Church was at work in this country twenty-two years before as many members were reported as we gained in six years, and from 1834 to 1902 that church has increased 500 per cent. There are nine separate Methodist churches among the white people of this country, and only two of these are larger than ours. The largest is fifteen times larger than we are, and we are one hundred and seventy-one times larger than the smallest. We are the third church in Methodism, six and one-third times larger than the fourth, and one-eighth as large as the second.

There are one hundred and twenty separate Protestant Churches among the white people of this country, and only sixteen of them are larger than ours. If all Protestants were equally divided among the several denominations the membership of each would be 141,000. We have, therefore, much more than our share in our 184,000 members.

(b) The true work of every church is the conversion of sinners, and I am persuaded the record of our church in this

work would thrill you could it be written. But statistics is a modern science and early Methodists thought a great deal more of working than of reporting their work. No attempt has ever been made to secure a report of the number of conversions in the whole Methodist Protestant Church, and it is only for the last seventeen years that this report has been made in the Maryland Conference. We must limit our survey therefore to our own Conference for this interesting record. But it is inspiring to think that the record shows 44,478 conversions in the last seventeen years in this Conference, or an average of twenty-five annually for every itinerant employed. These in the days when the great revivals are seen no more. Would not the record of the preceding fifty-seven years show a much larger average? Rev. John R. Nichols said at the close of his fiftieth year in the itinerancy that five thousand souls had been converted under his ministry. Nor is this exceptional. In 1842, as the result of twenty-one camp meetings held in the

Maryland district, there were 2,366 accessions to the church. And in those early years there were doubtless few earnest preachers who thought it at all extraordinary to have one hundred souls as their annual hire. However, since we have no actual reports of these results, we must content ourselves with the average of recent years. If we reckon but twenty-five conversions annually to every itinerant actively employed in the seventy-four years of our history, it appears that we may claim at least 114,000 conversions in the Maryland district. And if on the same basis we extend our calculation to embrace the whole church, we shall find that we are entitled to rejoice over the conversion of not less than 1,611,350 souls through the instrumentality of the Methodist Protestant Church. With uplifted hearts and joyful voices let us "praise God from whom all blessings flow."

Surely we may gratefully claim that the promise has been fulfilled, and that our Father has given us the kingdom! Men are joining our church, not through discontent with other churches; not

merely for better principles of government; certainly not for selfish ambition of social rewards, but because we have the keys of the kingdom of grace; because we have been taught the secret of divine consolation for a weary, sick world; because the Holy Spirit has been pleased to witness mightily through our preaching to the power of the Gospel to reach the hearts of men and turn them from darkness to light. For this cause we bow our knees in grateful adoration of the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, rejoicing with joy unspeakable to hear him say, "I know thy works; behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it; for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied My name."

I am aware that I have already outrun the proper limits of this discourse, and yet how can I stop here? Great and glorious as it is, the very foundation of all our glorying as a church, to get men converted and enroll them among Christ's people, we must do something *for* these men and give *them* something to do after we have opened to them the gate of

salvation. This is the meaning of the institutions of a church; they form the sphere of Christian activity; they are the expression of Christian gratitude and consecration, and they are the measure of Christian faith in the ultimate triumph of the kingdom of God.

I must not permit this discourse to wander into a history of the institutions of our church, yet a few of them must be mentioned as types of the kingdom we have received from our Father.

And first of all in time, in honor, and in all affectionate pre-eminence stands our free religious press. When God lifted before our fathers the vision of liberty in the welcome bonds of law; of a Methodism as free in its discipline as in its life; a spiritual empire of unfettered equals and brethren, he laid his hands on them and said, "Fear not, I am the first and the last. Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are and the things which shall be hereafter." And in obedience to this august mandate they wrote and would not be silenced. The Methodist Protestant newspaper may trace its lineage back to the

Wesleyan Repository, and thus claim to be the oldest religious periodical in America. It is the best, because the most significant monument to the memory of our fathers. They wrote in its columns the death sentence of ecclesiastical despotism; they wrote the charter of lay rights; they wrote into existence the Methodist Protestant Church, and its files are still the repository of all that can be said in defense of a people's government in Methodism. All who have come into this kingdom since their time have been the heirs of the intellectual and spiritual insight of our fathers under their testament as drawn in the *Methodist Protestant*. Out of the storm and stress of many conflicts our dear old paper has come into the dawn of this jubilee. Just eighty-two years ago the first number of the *Wesleyan Repository*—its first name—was published. It has come into serene and peaceful times. It has seen a noble assistant come to maturity and power with a long and honorable record in the West. It has seen its principles widely acknowledged, and no embargo on its circulation. Well may we rejoice that it

has lived to see this day. Long may it continue, and long will it continue if we have wisdom and courage to maintain nobly what was so nobly planned.

God's providence has opened to us in a very wonderful way another door of this intellectual kingdom. The founding of a college was one of the first things undertaken in one of the first General Conferences, "being," as it declared, "of the highest importance to the church." That particular effort failed, and another failed, and still a third failure, and yet one more; but we could not always fail. Our fathers believed that Christian education was a part of their mission as a church; that Christ must be enthroned in men's minds if his reign in their hearts is to be permanent; that the church must train the youth if it would sway the adult, and that our Lord's own way of leading men into the kingdom is to set a little child in the midst of them. So in this noble faith our fathers struggled on through the wilderness of inexperience for forty years and then at last came Western Maryland College, whose record of thirty-five years is unspotted with

failure, and whose five hundred and thirty-six graduates, student roll of two hundred and fifty, and property value of one hundred and fifty thousand dollars, attest the goodness of God and the triumph of Methodist Protestant faith and effort. Came also Adrian College, with its equally long history, equally creditable record, equally splendid property, and, although now passing through a critical period, equally promising future. Came also our Theological Seminary, founded twenty years ago on faith and graciously endowed with God's favor, and constantly increasing its usefulness. Came also Kansas City University in such a remarkable way, and hopefully pressing forward in the vigor of youth. What can this energy and persistence and consecration mean, but a fixed purpose, born of God, to buy the truth, to grow by spreading the truth, and to hand on, as our most sacred deposit to those coming after us, the truth by which all men are to be made and kept the free children of God. I call this the kingdom of permanence.

God's providence gave us the heathen for our inheritance, and the frontiers of

civilization for our possession. Alas, that we were so slow to enter! It was only twenty years ago that we sent our first preacher across the sea. But the beginning has been made; the responsibilities have been definitely assumed, and we stand pledged to-day to the forward movement, the only movement that can interpret Christianity to the world or answer for it at the Judgment. Forward to the waste places of America, till they blossom with the rose of Sharon, and to the deserts beyond, till they rejoice. Our zealous leaders in these great movements are far in advance of us and are crying to us to come up to the flag. But much as we merit their rebukes, we may rejoice that at least our tents are struck, we are on the march. More missionary money has been given and more missionary effort has been put forth in the last twelve months in the Methodist Protestant Church than in the whole Methodist Church for the first sixty years of its history. I call this the kingdom of progress.

The kingdom of beneficence was entered by us at the beginning, and some

of the most gracious work our church has done is the result of its inspiration. An impressive array of figures might be given here, but there is no money value in love, and we must not quench the fragrance of our sacrifice with boastful calculations. The provision for worn-out preachers and their widows and orphans; the timely succor extended to weak and struggling churches; the co-operation with evangelistic agencies among the destitute; the aid to those with insufficient salaries in the pastorate; the relief for our brothers bereaved; the solace for the aged—in these and other forms we have been illustrating our faith that it is more blessed to give than to receive. I call this the kingdom of blessedness; God's sweet home for those who love, where it is always radiant summer time in the soul; the antepast of heaven.

What shall we say then to these things? If God has thus established us and honored our service; if he has given us the kingdom of grace, whereby we are able to rescue men from ruin and establish them in heavenly citizenship; if he has

given us the kingdom of education, whereby we save our organization from the chances of uncertain emotion and build up believers into a permanent household of faith; if he has given us the kingdom of progress, by which we are rescued from stagnation and become a praise in the whole earth; if he has given us the kingdom of blessedness, by which we are made to know the exceeding riches of his goodness, will he not with these also freely give us all things?

As we stand to-day reviewing the past, our gratitude must break out in united thanksgiving. Thank God for a spiritual church that is not a spiritual despotism! Thank God for a church that in its variations from the original type still preserves the vitality of Methodism, believing that all men are lost, that all men may be saved, and that all men may know whether they are lost or saved! Thank God for a united church, covering twenty-eight States, preaching a theology with no concealments or reservations, and administering a government founded on the consent of the governed! Thank God for a church of which it is said "a million

souls and more were born there!" Thank God for a church whose one hundred and eighty-four thousand members and one hundred and twenty-six thousand children meet in its two thousand four hundred houses of worship, where "the pure word of God is preached and the Sacraments are duly administered according to Christ's ordinance" by its sixteen hundred pastors. Thank God for a church equipped for the war of truth against error in Christian press and in Christian Colleges; for the conquest of idolatry and iniquity by heroic missionaries; for the uplifting of the unfortunate, for the consolation of the distressed, and for the advancement of all good against all evil wherever men struggle and cry for help! Thank God for a church that has no politics, courts no princes, builds no cathedrals, invokes no force but the sword of the Spirit, draws all its authority from "One is your Master, even Christ," and all its solidarity from "all ye are brethren!" Thank God for a church old enough to point to its past as its vindication, and young enough to see

the beginning of its triumphs as the vanguard of the people's Methodism! Thank God, and again thank God for the Methodist Protestant Church!

"Fear not, little flock." 'Tis our Lord and Chief Shepherd who thus exhorts us. And the voice of history repeats the encouragement, and from all our present surroundings and our future outlook comes the same assuring cry, "Fear not, little flock." Why *should* we fear? If we are not so little as to escape God's notice; if he has honored us in his service and multiplied our feeble agencies and magnified his word in our stammering lips, why *should* we fear? Or, *whom* should we fear? Our foes are the enemies of light and liberty and love. Our allies are all the forces of law and progress and truth. Our future is the everlasting kingdom of Jesus Christ. Whom should we fear?

We will not fear; we will spend the passion of our souls in loving. We will sing with a new inspiration, "I love Thy church, O God!" and we will think first of all of this dear church, which is ours in so peculiar a sense; ours, because we have

made it what it is, and it has made us what we are; because it brought us back to our Father, trained us in its Sunday Schools, believed in us and opened doors of opportunity to us and heaped honors upon us. It has put itself unreservedly in our hands; a free theology, a free government, a free life, asking us only to be faithful to the truth which made us free. This church is our mother, our bride, and if we love not this church, which we have seen, how shall we love the church universal, which we have not seen?

Will you warn us against bigotry? Warn us rather against indifference, that canker of all enthusiasm. Warn us against a calculating prudence that counts all things but loss that pay no dividends to personal aggrandizement. Warn us against a cold selfishness that will kindle no fire on any altar lest it be called bigotry. Warn us against a love so miscellaneous that it can meet with all apostolic churches about the table of our Lord and find none on whose breast it can lean.

But to us, O dear and lovely Zion, how goodly are thy palaces; how sweet thy

society! We love to walk about thee, to consider thy foundations, to tell thy towers! Strength and beauty are in thy sanctuary; liberty and peace inhabit thy house. Our loyalty to God has been sworn on thine altars; the symbols of our devotion are hung on thy walls; our yearning for the lost, our sympathy with the saints, our joy in religion, our faith, our prayers, our tears, our hope of heaven—are all bound up with thee. How can we cease to love thee, to rejoice in thee, to serve thee? How can we forget thee, O Jerusalem! Though thou be little among the thousands of Judah; though the heritage of thy children must always be obscurity and poverty; though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not, "God do so to me and more also, if aught but death part thee and me!"

I feel the presence of a great company here to-day. Those who purchased this heritage for us with a great price and finally entered the kingdom through much tribulation are with us. O fathers! serene and at rest in the land of peace; all controversy over and knowing each

other as ye are known, look upon us to-day with benignant regard, and tell us if we too are fighting a good fight, and laying hold upon the eternities. The noble veterans whom God still spares to us in this Conference, who bear in their bodies the marks of the Lord Jesus, insignia of glory past and glory to come, are here to answer once more to the earthly roll-call. Tell us, venerable men, as ye stand looking steadfastly into heaven, "What of the night?" Is a better morning rising upon us, and will ye consecrate us before ye go to a larger and fuller devotion to Christ and the Church, that we may carry farther up the slope the triumph you have won.

And as we turn to face the future, I feel the presence of another company approaching. They are coming from our homes, our altars, our colleges and seminaries; our young people looking for and hasting unto the coming of the kingdom. You, too, comrades, we hail in the Lord! You are not too late for great occasions. The clock of the centuries is striking high noon. The problems and contests and victories of the church are

greater than ever before. Come in then with your reaper while these veterans are laying aside their sickle. Come in with your fuller knowledge, your wider culture and your stronger grasp of the present needs. Come in with your faith deepened and buttressed by your wider investigation; your hope broadened out into a more comprehensive scope of the possibilities of the Gospel remedy for the woes of the world. And above all, for the greatest of these is love, come in with your love flaming into sacrifice and unselfishness and generosity and untiring devotion to God and man. If you cannot love so, there is no happiness for you in the Methodist Protestant Church. There is no kingdom here for those whose only thought is, who shall be greatest in it. Better learn it now than confess it in humiliation later. With us it is not power, nor numbers, nor social prestige, nor personal advancement; we have no ecclesiastical ribbons, nor titles; you will get small salaries in the ministry, and only the position you can achieve by your merit in the laity; with us it is love or nothing. But if you can love; if

you can bear all things, believe all things, hope all things, endure all things, and still love; then, in the name of all those whose love for this church has perfumed the ecclesiastical history of the last century, I bid you welcome into the Methodist Protestant Church.

Come, then, and let us pour out our sacred oblation together. Let us place on the altar our worldly ambition, our hope of personal preferment, our pride, our envy of the great, our humiliation at being little; bind the sacrifice with cords; make the vow irrevocable; and now if indeed our all is on the altar, let us pray for the fire: "O Lord God of our fathers, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that we are thy servants, and that we have done all these things at thy word. Hear us, O Lord, hear us, for our fathers' sake; and let the fire of the Lord fall and consume our sacrifice, and purify our love, and kindle our enthusiasm, and enlighten our zeal, and set on fire our whole nature with a quenchless ardor for thee, and for all whom thou hast given us. And then send the sweet showers of blessing

on our preaching and working and praying and giving, that we may know that thou hast turned our hearts back again; that thou hast still left with us the joy and the power of salvation, and that thou hast given us the kingdom according to thy word."

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